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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: SMOKE LIKE A TURK NO MORE

1.(SBU) Summary. On July 19, Turkey banned smoking in all enclosed public spaces, including bars, cafes, and restaurants. This second installment of a smoking ban that began in May 2008 came into effect amid public and business complaints. Turkey has one of the highest cigarette consumption rates in the world, and health officials and non-smokers are delighted with the new law. The ban was opposed by smokers, many business owners, and some in the secularist camp who see the smoking ban not as a health measure but as a GOT attempt to impose conservative religious values and as a first step towards an alcohol ban. To the surprise of many, however, compliance appeared to be quite high during the law's first week. End Summary.

Law No. 4207

12. (U) Parts of Law no. 4207 entered into force on May 5, 2008, banning smoking in taxis, malls and offices. The second and more comprehensive part came into effect on July 19. It provides:

----Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed spaces, including those at restaurants, cafes, coffee houses, bars and all entertainment centers, in public transportation vehicles (including taxis), in both open and enclosed spaces at education, arts, and sporting event areas. Special enclosed spaces can be assigned within these facilities for smoking, but cannot exceed 50 percent of the total space. This means that nargile (water pipe) cafes with no outdoor seating will have to shut down. These cafes are popular in tourist areas.
----Smoking is not banned in prisons, nursing homes, mental hospitals or on the decks of ferries. However, there must be an area assigned specially for smoking that children will not be able to enter.
----Smoking is allowed in open gardens as long as the proper equipment is installed to ensure that nonsmokers are not bothered by the cigarette smoke.
----Smoking is prohibited under umbrellas erected in gardens. Smoking is only allowed if all four sides of an area are open and the sky is visible.
----Hotels will be able to have rooms available that smoking is allowed, but children will not be able to stay in those rooms.
----Cigarettes may not be sold at health, education, entertainment or sports facilities.
----Provincial smoking-control councils are being established by the Health Ministry.
Penalties for Smoking

13. (U) Smokers violating the law will be fined 69 Turkish Liras. Bars and restaurants that violate the law will be fined 500 liras. For subsequent violations of the law the fines will increase up to 5,600 liras. The Ministry of Health has trained a 5,000 person task force to patrol establishment and dole out fines to anyone caught lighting up. Ministry inspection teams will fine violators of the new law, and the GOT expects fines to provide a significant monetary infusion into the Treasury. The MOH will also establish complaint hotlines in every city, and citizens will be able to inform authorities about people not abiding by the law.

Health Officials Are Happy

14. (U) The smoking ban is being praised by health officials and non-smokers. Health advocates are hoping that the legislation will be taken seriously, saying that it will protect against secondhand smoke and help Turks quit smoking. According to the World Health Organization Turkey has one of the highest consumption of cigarettes in the world, with about half of men and 20 percent of women smoking. A 2003 WHO survey of 16,000 Turkish teenagers revealed that 11 percent were regular smokers, and about 30 percent had tried their first cigarette before the age of 10. GOT health care officials estimate that about 100,000 Turks die annually from tobacco related illnesses, costing billions every year in health care expenses.

Smokers, Businesses and Secularists are Not

15. (SBU) For the country that inspired the phrase 'to smoke like a Turk' imposing a comprehensive public smoking ban was a quite controversial move. To the surprise of many, compliance with the smoking ban appears to be quite high, at least during the law's first week in force. Historically, alcohol and cigarettes have gone hand in hand in Turkey, and many Turks say the law will push people into parks and streets if they cannot smoke and drink in a pub or cafe, or chain smoke through dinner in a restaurant.

16. (SBU) The ban was opposed by many business owners, smokers, and some in the secularist camp who see the smoking ban not as a health measure but as a GOT attempt to impose conservative religious values and as a first step towards an alcohol ban. Many business owners, especially owners of restaurants and bars, say they expect a sharp decline in

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business. However, business owners in tourist areas are generally happier with the ban, because they believe non-smoking tourists will feel more comfortable in previously smokey restaurants, cafes, and bars and make up for any loss of Turkish customers.

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JEFFREY